

REASON AND INSPIRATION IN ISLAM

THEOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY AND MYSTICISM IN
MUSLIM THOUGHT

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Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān and the Concept of *Bāṭin*

Bulbul Shah

The elaboration of the esoteric aspect of the Islamic revelation has remained one of the primary commitments of the Ismaili thinkers. They have consistently engaged themselves in the examination of the esoteric aspect throughout history. Here, an attempt will be made to examine the view of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (d. 363/974) in relation to the esoteric aspect, particularly the extent of its implications and the means of its manifestation.¹

Let us, first, give the definitions of the terms that the Fatimid author employs during the analysis of the theme and that are pertinent in terms of forming the basis for the implications of the esoteric aspect and those of the means through which it becomes manifest.

According to al-Nu'mān, everything has two aspects; one is exoteric and the other is esoteric. He defines the exoteric aspect (*ẓāhir*) as perceptible through the senses and the esoteric aspect (*bāṭin*) as comprehended by knowledge. In other words, *bāṭin* is the object of true knowledge.² The other terms which al-Nu'mān employs with regard to the elaboration of the categories of the exoteric and esoteric aspects include *tanzīl* and *ta'wīl*, respectively. Although *bāṭin* and *ta'wīl* are identical in terms of conveying the inner aspect, al-Nu'mān uses the former in a broad sense, applying it to both the Islamic revelation and creation. However, he uses the term *ta'wīl* relatively restrictively, emphasising the esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an.³

Before proceeding to the formulation of the categories of the exoteric and esoteric aspects it may, however, be mentioned that the Fatimid author makes the Qur'an, the tradition of the Prophet and the sayings of the Imams the sources of his information in providing us with the definitions of the terms and the elaboration of the theme under consideration.

The Implications of the Categories of the Exoteric and Esoteric Aspects

Al-Nu'mān formulates the categories of the exoteric and esoteric aspects applying them to both the Islamic revelation and creation, as regards their inter-relationship. Creation, in his opinion, corroborates the Islamic revelation and leads one ultimately to the acceptance of religious belief such as the Unity of God.⁴ The inter-relationship in question, he suggests, can well be understood by concentrating on the categories of the exoteric and esoteric aspects. In elaborating the categories in question he refers to the Qur'an which states: 'And of everything have We created in pairs (*zawjayn*), that you may reflect.' (Qur'an 51:49)

The idea of *zawjān* is one of those bases which, according to al-Nu'mān, not only determines that Islamic revelation and creation comprise the exoteric and the esoteric aspects, but also points to the Unity of God (*waḥda*), Who is far beyond being associated with any human attributes, including the idea of duality. Al-Nu'mān suggests that the negation of the idea of *zawjān* and of *muzāwaja*, duality, would simply lead to anthropomorphism, which is inconceivable to him. Furnishing evidence for the presence of the *zawjān* in creation, he uses the example of the human being who is compounded of two entities: one is the body and the other is the soul. The body is evident and the soul is hidden. Each of these aspects contains two further dimensions: the human body has the characteristics of coldness and dryness and the soul is warm and wet. When the soul leaves the body, the latter becomes cold and dry, implying the inevitability of the coexistence of these aspects for survival in this world and also their multi-dimensional nature.⁵

Al-Nu'mān provides further Qur'anic references for the concept of *zawjān*. These references are made in numerous contexts, reinforcing the two aspects. Among these references are the ones which describe the bounties which human beings receive and which the Qur'an emphatically declares to be of two sorts: seen and unseen bounties (Qur'an 31:20) and that, on the Day of Judgement, people will be asked about these bounties (Qur'an 102:8).⁶

The Fatimid writer finds that these verses compel one to have a comprehensive knowledge of these bounties, particularly the unseen bounties. Anyone who is ignorant of the unseen bounties, he states, would not be able to provide an answer when asked to do so, in spite of their awareness of accountability on that matter.⁷ Therefore, the Ismaili thinker's view leads one to conclude that attaining knowledge of the esoteric aspect is indispensable in order to be able to discharge one's responsibility for providing the answer, ideally with regard to the bounties.⁸

Furthermore, al-Nu'mān applies the principle of *zāhir* and *bāṭin* to sins. For him, the Qur'anic injunction 'Forsake open and secret sins (*dharū zāhira'l-ithmi wa-bāṭina*)' (Qur'an 6:120) provides evidence for the aspects in question. Accentuating the consequences of this Qur'anic injunction, he raises the issue that, if a person is ignorant of a secret sin, is it not feared that they might indulge in that

sin?⁹ The only remedy available for indulging in the sin, he would suggest, is to acquire knowledge of the *bāṭin*.

As already indicated, *tanzīl* and *ta'wīl* comprise another set of terms which the Fatimid writer applies to the meanings of the Qur'an.¹⁰ He particularly examines the unique nature of *ta'wīl* by referring to the Qur'an. The verses he quotes describe *ta'wīl* as mysterious and arcane. Because of these particular characteristics, it remains beyond the comprehension of everybody except God and 'those well rooted in knowledge' (*al-rāsikhūna fi'l-'ilm*), who, according to al-Nu'mān, are the Prophet and the Imams descended from his progeny. This is the essential aspect of the theme which will be discussed afterwards. Our author evidently is aware of the contemporary controversy within the Muslim community as a whole surrounding the interpretation of the verse quoted, that is to say, as to the identity of 'those well rooted in knowledge' and whether they have knowledge of *ta'wīl*. He understandably advocates the Fatimid position. In doing so, he reads the verse under consideration in this manner. 'No one knows its *ta'wīl* except Allāh and those who are of sound instruction (*al-rāsikhūna fi'l-'ilm*).'¹¹

Al-Nu'mān elaborates the theme further by considering the application of the esoteric aspect to the whole Qur'an. To corroborate this, he refers to a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet in which he is reported to have described the Qur'an as containing both exoteric and esoteric aspects. It appears from the statement of the Fatimid author that the interpretations of the *ḥadīth* given by Muslim writers varied though the *ḥadīth* itself was accepted and agreed upon not only by Ismaili writers but also by a number of other Muslim writers, including Ithnā'ashariyya and Sufis.¹²

The other classification which al-Nu'mān relates to the meanings is that of the Qur'anic 'symbol/s' (*mathal /amthāl*),¹³ implying that they are incomprehensible to an ordinary mind because of their complex implications and extraordinarily profound meanings. The verses of the Qur'an under consideration suggest that the symbols have distinctive characteristics and thus are subject to special treatment.

At this point it should be mentioned that the Fatimid author does not define the term 'symbol/s' *mathal/amthāl* in explicit terms in the relevant chapter of his *Asās al-ta'wīl*. However, in considering his discussion of the term in a wider context, it is clear that he also uses the term 'symbolised meaning/s' (*mamthūl /mamthūlāt*), to refer to the ultimate implications and aims of the symbols.¹⁴

Al-Nu'mān examines these textual elements further from the perspective of language as the vehicle for the Divine revelation. He holds that the expressions 'the esoteric aspect' (*al-bāṭin*), 'the inner interpretation' (*al-ta'wīl*) and the symbols (*al-amthāl*) are not external to the Arabic language, but parts of it. However, he suggests that the Qur'anic language is unique and special by stating that it is the embodiment of the Divine revelation. Because of the synthesis of wonders and marvels of the revelation, he states, there is more than one meaning for the same thing, namely the exoteric and the esoteric aspects.¹⁵

The Imams as the Inheritors of the Knowledge of the Revelation

On the basis of the divinely revealed traits of the Qur'an, al-Nu'mān states that the Prophet Muḥammad and the Imams are both the possessors and sources of its knowledge. He emphasises the functions of the Prophet and the Imams by attributing the exoteric aspect to the former and the esoteric aspect to the latter. The *ẓāhir*, he states is the miracle of the Prophet and the *bāṭin*, that of the Imams. The designated Imam, in his opinion, is the source and depository (*mustawda'*) of the knowledge of the *bāṭin*.¹⁶ The word '*mustawda'*' connotes that the Imam receives the knowledge from the Prophet as an inheritance, a point to which we should now turn.

The knowledge of the *bāṭin*, as one of the hereditary characteristics, is an integral aspect of the concept of the Imāma. The Imams receive these characteristics as a result of designation based on the divine order.¹⁷ The status of the Imams as the possessors of the knowledge under consideration is believed to be referred to in the Qur'an and to be interpreted by the Prophet and the Imams. For example, as it has been discussed already, the Qur'an makes references to its *ta'wīl* by considering it to be arcane and thus only fathomable by God and 'those of sound instruction' (*al-rāsikhūna fi'l-ilm*).¹⁸

'Alī was one of 'those of sound instruction' since the Prophet referred to him as responsible for the interpretation of the *ta'wīl*¹⁹ and the gate of the city of knowledge (of revelation).²⁰ Al-Nu'mān holds that 'Alī's knowledge continued through the Imams. Among the proofs which al-Nu'mān furnishes with regard to the transmission of the knowledge is a statement made by 'Alī, who considers the knowledge of the Imams to be the same as that of the prophets. Thus, the knowledge that the Imams received from the last Prophet, according to 'Alī, was originally deposited with Adam and, on the basis of this, the prophets were divinely awarded preferential treatment.²¹

The concept of knowledge may further be elaborated upon in order to determine how this permeates through other aspects of inheritance in the Imāma. Amongst the inheritance-related characteristics of the Imam, the Qur'anic imperative 'restore deposits to their owners' (*tu'addu'l-amānāti ilā ahlihā*) (Qur'an 4:58) will be focused on presently.²² Al-Nu'mān, on the authority of Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir, propounds the Qur'anic command by concentrating on the components of the inheritance and their owners. The components of the inheritance, according to the Imam, are: the books (*al-kutub*), the knowledge (*al-ilm*) and the weapon (*al-silāh*).²³ 'The books' (*al-kutub*) and 'the knowledge' (*al-ilm*) refer to the knowledge of the Imams. The Imams possess the knowledge of the revealed books and particularly that of the Qur'an.²⁴

We may now turn to the subject of 'the weapon' (*al-silāh*) as it relates to the question of knowledge. From the context it can evidently be understood that by weapon al-Nu'mān means the famous sword, Dhu'l-Fiqr, which was given to 'Alī by the Prophet and which is held to be inherited by the Imams.²⁵

According to our author, the metaphorical significance of the sword, Dhū'l-Fiqr, lay in its symbolising the special knowledge of the Imams. To support this, al-Nu'mān refers to Imām al-Mu'izz who holds that the Prophet gave the Dhū'l-Fiqr to 'Alī to show his divinely granted qualities such as his nobility (*karāma*), his aptitude for furnishing evidence (*al-ḥujja*) and, above all, his knowledge.²⁶ In the realm of knowledge, other characteristics of the Imams are also emphasised. These characteristics include the status of the Imams as the bearers of the Divine illuminating substance (*nūr*), and the ones who receive Divine help (*ta'yīd*), and inspiration (*ilhām*).²⁷

The traits of the Imams as discussed in the above paragraphs emphasise the divinely bestowed and inherited knowledge, on the basis of which they guide. The traits also denote that an Imam does not require any teacher other than the preceding Imam from whom he imbibes the particular knowledge. The preceding Imam entrusts the Imāma to him and thus teaches him.²⁸ On the basis of all this, al-Nu'mān refers to the knowledge of the Imams as the real and true knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ḥaqīqī*) and the one which is transmitted from one Imam to another Imam (*al-'ilm al-ma'thūr*).²⁹

The Imams as the Interpreters of the Bāṭin

Examining the interpretative authority of the Imams, it can be seen that the unfolding of the esoteric aspect depends upon suitability. The Imams consider the various levels of the comprehension of the believers. A *bāṭinī* 'knowledge' that is appropriate for the one advanced in understanding is not to be revealed to the one whose understanding is inferior and who does not deserve it, which, in turn, indicates that the *bāṭin* itself has more than one level.³⁰

Esoteric instruction is to be provided by the Imams for selected individuals in groups and also on a one-to-one basis. The availability of this particular instruction, as al-Nu'mān implies, is subject to the required level of comprehension. The utmost grade of the *bāṭin*, that is the highest level of the stages of teachings, may well be understood by considering the overall Fatimid *da'wa* instructional system.

According to al-Nu'mān, Imām al-Mu'izz classified Ismaili teachings, dividing the corpus into three categories: (1) the exoteric aspect (the primary stage); (2) introduction to the esoteric aspect (the intermediary stage); (3) the pure esoteric aspect (the highest stage).³¹

Our author describes the different levels of Fatimid teachings somewhat in detail. The primary stage comprises the exoteric teachings as authorised and recommended by the Imams. Specifically, the authorised and recommended source for these teachings was the *Da'ā'im al-Islām* of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān,³² one of those books compiled under the direct supervision and guidance of the Imam. The reason for this insistence on the *Da'ā'im* may be visualised by taking into consideration the

fact that even the exoteric aspect, particularly of Islamic teachings, as understood by various schools of thought within Islam, is not absolutely homogeneous. These schools of thought, for example, agree on the understanding and performance of some religious obligations while differing on those of others.

At any rate, the primary stage of instruction is followed by the intermediary stage which is referred to as 'the stage of spiritual infancy' (*ḥadd riḍā' al-bāṭin*). The Imam admitted into this level the ones whom he had selected from those at the primary stage. He introduced *ta'wīl* to the elevated ones. Although (esoteric) allusions were made frequently, sometimes clear (exoteric) indications were also given. Al-Nu'mān considers his *Hudūd al-ma'rifa* to be the sort of collection of teachings suitable for this level. The training took two years.³³

Afterwards, the Imam initiated those selected into 'the spiritual upbringing stage' (*ḥadd al-tarbiyya*). At this stage, it was recommended that the *Ta'wīl al-da'ā'im* be taught. Those who fulfilled all the conditions of this level were considered to be spiritually mature adherents.³⁴

Finally, we may briefly refer to the modes of the manifestation of the knowledge of the Imam in relation to the believers. According to al-Nu'mān, as we have already said, the Imam is the divinely authorised interpreter of the revelation, the master of its *ta'wīl*. However, he provides guidance and *bāṭinī* instructions, either himself or by means of the hierarchical system which he sets up. The Fatimid hierarchy drew its authority from the Imam and was ultimately responsible to him regarding all matters relating to the believers.

Al-Nu'mān substantiates the Imam's overall guiding relationship with the believers in ways both directly and also indirectly through his disciples, those who received religious instruction from him and became responsible for working for the *da'wā*. For example, he cites a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet in which he is reported to have said: 'Obtain the knowledge from the learned of my progeny ('*ālim ahl baytī*'), namely the Imam, or from him who has obtained it from the learned of my progeny and you will be saved from Hell.'³⁵

The prophetic tradition emerges as evidence for the Ismaili hierarchy; the phrase '... or from him who has obtained it from the learned of my progeny' must be read as an oblique reference to the hierarchy. Elucidating this, al-Nu'mān describes the knowledge of the Imam as emanating from him to his *ḥujja* and thence to the lower ranks.³⁶

However, the Fatimid author reiterates the supremacy of the Imam by examining the intrinsic nature of his knowledge. Accordingly, in his opinion, it is the Imams who are learned in the real sense (*al-'Ulamā' bi'l-ḥaqīqa*). The hierarchy below him does not enjoy that status, as they lack the qualifications necessary for it, including inheritance. However, the hierarchy working under the Imam can be referred to as learned in a figurative sense (*al-'Ulamā' bi'l-majāz*) since they receive knowledge from the Imam. The knowledge of the disciples, however, is subject to their

obedience to, and love and reverence for the Imams. Al-Nu'mān's view is based on the Qur'an. For example Ibrāhīm, one of the leading prophets, insisting on the role of obedience states: 'But whoso followeth me he verily is of me.' (Qur'an 14:36)³⁷

Conclusion

The concept of *bāṭin*, then, is a tenth-century Ismaili principle of interpretation of the Islamic revelation that is seen to coordinate the revelation with creation, including man. The aims of this study include creating and reinforcing the awareness of the truths underlying the Islamic revelation and creation, and reinforcing the need for identification and recognition of the ways and means of acquiring knowledge of them. In understanding the points underlined above (among other aspects of the formulation of the view of al-Nu'mān) the sequence and organisation of the texts concerned, particularly that of the introduction to the *Asās al-ta'wīl*, are significant.

In his formulation, the Ismaili author proceeds from creation to the revelation, perhaps referring to the former as a stepping stone to the latter. The easiest method by which a human being may learn is from creation, and particularly from his or her own self. By concentrating on creation properly, the 'horizon' of one's understanding is widened which results in him or her being led to the belief system.

Qur'anic knowledge, and particularly of the *bāṭin/ta'wīl*, is the highest instructional level as envisaged and elaborated by al-Nu'mān. This is the aspect of the revelation which is beyond the comprehension of an ordinary person. It therefore necessitates the presence of divinely designated guides after the Prophet, namely the Imams descended from his progeny, who inherit the knowledge from him.

In short, the Imam, al-Nu'mān's analysis would suggest, is the final authority for Qur'anic knowledge and through his instrumentality one can take cognisance of the truths as necessary for spiritual advancement.

Notes

1. References to various features of the life of al-Nu'mān, including his works, have been made in several works. Some contemporary scholars have undertaken serious studies of him. See, for example: Wilferd Madelung, 'The Sources of Isma'ili Law', *JNES*, 35 (1976), pp. 29–40; A. A. Fyzee, 'Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān the Fāṭimid Jurist and Author', *JRAS* (1934), pp. 11–532.

2. Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, ed. 'Ārif Tāmīr (Beirut, 1960), p. 28.

3. Ibid., pp. 28–29, 31.

4. Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Ta'wīl al-da'ā'im*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan al-A'zamī (Cairo, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 48–49; also see *Asās al-ta'wīl*, pp. 43–49, 51–52.

5. Al-Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, pp. 28–29.

6. Ibid., p. 29.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Al-Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, pp. 29, 31.

10. Ibid., p. 29.

11. The vast majority of Shi'i writers explicitly state that 'those of sound instruction' (*al-rāsikhūna fi'l-'ilm*), namely, the Prophet and the Imams, possess the knowledge of the *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an. Therefore, the phrase '*al-rāsikhūna fi'l-'ilm*' is to be connected with the name, *Allāh*. See: Al-Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, p. 29; his *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, ed. A. A. A. Fyzee (Cairo, 1951–1960), vol. 1, pp. 28–29; al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (4th ed., Beirut, 1401/1980–1981), vol. 1, p. 213; 'Alī Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, ed. al-Sayyid Ṭayyib al-Mūsawī (2nd ed., Najaf, 1388/1968), vol. 1, pp. 96–97; however, Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī, one of the Ithnā'asharī commentators on the Qur'an totally neglects the Shi'i position under consideration, while at the same time referring to some other views on the theme; these will be given below shortly. See: Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qur'an* (Najaf, 1383–1389/1964–1969), vol. 2, pp. 394–400. As for a few of the Sunni sources, according to al-Ṭabarī, the commentators on the Qur'an from the earlier generations hold different views as to whether 'those of sound instruction' (*al-rāsikhūna fi'l-'ilm*) possess the knowledge of the *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an. 'Ā'isha and Ibn 'Abbās, for example, are said to have held that 'those of sound instruction' do not know the *ta'wīl*. Because in the opinion of these individuals, the phrase 'those of sound instruction' is not to be taken as connected with the name, *Allāh*. However, according to these individuals, 'those of sound instruction' reaffirm their belief in the revelation in its entirety.

On the other hand, the name of Ibn 'Abbās is put in the list of names of those who are of the opinion that 'those of sound instruction' have the knowledge of the *ta'wīl*. On the basis of firmness in the knowledge, they reaffirm their belief in the revelation. See al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* (Cairo, 1954), vol. 3, pp. 182–184.

The position of Ibn 'Abbās on the knowledge of the *ta'wīl* needs further consideration, in view of the significance which the non-Shi'i sources award to him and also to make an attempt to clarify the ambiguity surrounding the conflicting reports about his understanding of the knowledge of the *ta'wīl*. If the reports attributed to Ibn 'Abbās are genuine, there can be two possible interpretations of them, either of which may represent the actual attitude of Ibn 'Abbās towards *ta'wīl*. In the first place, Ibn 'Abbās may have expressed a view similar to that of 'Ā'isha and others who hold that only God knows the *ta'wīl*. Then he may have changed it to the other view. Alternatively, it cannot be ruled out that Ibn 'Abbās expressed both views with different interpretations in mind. One may adhere to this assumption on the basis of the view of Ibn 'Abbās that *ta'wīl* has more than one level. According to Ibn 'Abbās, the Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsīr*) has four aspects or levels. The 'level one' interpretation can be known to anybody, as it relates to the basics. While the 'level two' interpretation is known to the Arabs. This is so because of the language skills involved. The third level interpretation is known to 'those of sound instruction'. However, the final level of interpretation is known to God alone. Nobody else can understand it. See: Ibn Kathīr, *Mukhtaṣar tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī (Beirut, 1981), vol. 1, p. 265. On the basis of this definition, one may hold the view that when Ibn 'Abbās denies his involvement in the knowledge of the *ta'wīl*, he may be referring to the 'level four' interpretation. On the other hand, his claim of knowledge of the *ta'wīl* may be a reference to the 'level three' interpretation.

12. Al-Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, p. 30; for some of the non-Isma'ili interpretations of the categories of the exoteric and esoteric aspects see Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin*, ed. Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq (Najaf, 1383/1964), vol. 2, p. 243; Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Dār Iḥyā' Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1957–1958), vol. 2, p. 169; Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb* (Cairo, 1932), vol. 2, pp. 6–7; Ibn Taymiyya, 'al-Risāla fī'l-'ilm al-bāṭin wa'l-zāhir', in *Majmū'āt rasā'il al-Muniriyya*, ed., Muḥammad Amīn Damaj (Beirut, 1970), vol. 1, p. 230; Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam* (Berlin, 1980), pp. 138–142; al-Ḥabīb al-Faqī, *al-Ta'wīl: Ususuḥu wa-ma'ānihi fī'l-madhhab al-Isma'īlī* (Tunis, n.d.), p. 45, n. 81. It should be born in mind that even some non-Shi'i thinkers and writers insist on *bāṭin* or *ta'wīl* to be revealed only to those who are capable of comprehending it. Ibn Rushd appears to be vehemently advocating this view. He corroborates the secrecy by referring to 'Alī who is reported to have said: 'Tell people what they can understand. (By telling them otherwise), do you want them to accuse God and His Prophet of lying?' Ibn Rushd thinks that the *bāṭin* relates to some parts of the Qur'an but not to others. See: Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl wa-taqrīr bayn al-sharī'a wa'l-ḥikma minā'l-ittiṣāl*, ed. B. N. Nadir (5th ed., Beirut, 1986), pp. 38, 36; Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 95.

13. Al-Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, pp. 30–31; see Qur'an 29:43, 2:26, 25:39, 39:27.

14. Al-Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, pp. 61–62.

15. Ibid., p. 31.

16. Ibid., pp. 31–32.

17. See for al-Nu'mān's elaboration of the designation and of inheritance in the *Imāma*: Bulbul Shah, 'The Imām as Interpreter of the Qur'an according to al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān' (MA, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1984), pp. 23–25, 31–33; also see: S. M. H. Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (2nd ed., Qumm, 1409/1989), pp. 289–292.

18. See above notes 11 and 12.

19. Al-Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, p. 200; Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghāba* (Cairo, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 32. According to some other sources, the Prophet addressed his Companions and said: 'There is a person among you who will fight for the sake of the *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an as I fought for the sake of its *tanzīl*.' Upon hearing this, Abū Bakr and 'Umar stood up, thinking that the Prophet had referred to them. However, the Prophet said: 'No, it is the one who is mending the shoes.' At the time 'Alī was mending the shoes. See: Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 3, pp. 33, 82; al-Ḥākīm al-Nayshābūrī, *Mustadrak 'alā al-ṣaḥīḥayn* (Deccan, 1341/1922–1923), vol. 3, pp. 132–133.

20. Al-Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, p. 86; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Deccan, 1326/1907–1908), vol. 7, p. 337; al-Ḥākīm, *Mustadrak*, pp. 133, 146–147.

21. Al-Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, p. 61; this view was also expressed by Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. See *al-Majālis wa'l-musāyārāt*, ed. al-Ḥabīb al-Faqī, Ibrāhīm Shabbūḥ and Muḥammad al-Ya'lawī (Tunis, 1978), p. 272; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 223. It is to be noted that Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, one of the most respected authorities in Sufism, has expressed a similar view with regard to the Sufi shaykh. According to him, the saint is the heir of the Prophet. He substantiates this view with one of the *aḥādith* of the Prophet: 'The scholars are the heirs of the Prophet.' This being the case, according to Suhrawardī, the

knowledge of the saint is the continuation of the Divine knowledge deposited with Adam. See: Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (Cairo, 1357/1939), pp. 62–63.

22. Al-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, pp. 26–27; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 276.
23. Al-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, pp. 26–27.
24. Ibid., p. 29, al-Nuʿmān, *al-Majālis*, p. 379; al-Nuʿmān, *Asās al-taʾwīl*, p. 61; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pp. 223–229 and 213–214.
25. Al-Nuʿmān, *al-Majālis*, pp. 208–209; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pp. 232–237.
26. Al-Nuʿmān, *al-Majālis*, pp. 208–209.
27. Al-Nuʿmān, *Kitāb al-himma fī ādab atbāʾ al-aʾimma*, ed. Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn (Cairo, n.d.), p. 128; *Iftitāḥ al-daʿwa*, ed. F. Dashrāwī (Tunis, 1975), p. 338; some of Ithnāʿasharī sources have made references to similar ideas. For a detailed study see Abd al-Karim (Douglas Sloan) Crow, 'The Teaching of Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq' (M.A., Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 1980), pp. 37–38, 143–145 and 148–149.
28. Al-Nuʿmān, *Iftitāḥ*, p. 338.
29. Al-Nuʿmān, *Asās al-taʾwīl*, p. 66; al-Nuʿmān, *Iftitāḥ*, p. 338.
30. Al-Nuʿmān, *Asās al-taʾwīl*, p. 32.
31. Al-Nuʿmān, *Taʾwīl*, pp. 48–49.
32. Ibid., p. 48.
33. Al-Nuʿmān, *Taʾwīl*, p. 49; al-Nuʿmān, *Asās al-taʾwīl*, pp. 25–26.
34. Al-Nuʿmān, *Taʾwīl*, p. 49.
35. Ibid., p. 71.
36. Ibid., p. 66; al-Nuʿmān, *al-Majālis*, p. 94; al-Nuʿmān, *Asās al-taʾwīl*, p. 85.
37. Al-Nuʿmān, *Taʾwīl*, p. 66.